

Moscow May Be Ready To Deal on Arms Control

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

THE idea that economic problems will impel Moscow toward making important compromises in the Geneva arms talks persists in the arms control debate. President Reagan himself gave support to this view when he said he was "optimistic that we're going to make more progress than probably has been made in a number of years because of some of the problems that are concerning the General Secretary at this time."

That was not the only time that Mr. Reagan expressed this view of the predicament of Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. Referring to the Soviet Union's economic problems in a speech in December, Mr. Reagan said, "We hope that with that as a help that maybe we can begin a reduction." Mr. Reagan's remarks seem particularly relevant now, when there appear to be opportunities for negotiating on arms issues. A high-level

meeting with Soviet arms control officials is scheduled for Sept. 5 and 6 in Washington.

In addition, arms talks are scheduled to resume in Geneva on Sept. 18. Separate talks on verification measures for nuclear testing and the establishment of "risk reduction centers" — where the two sides could exchange reassuring data on exercises involving their strategic forces — are also scheduled to resume soon. In these meetings, the two sides seem to be seeking areas leading to agreements, however modest, that could be made formal at a Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Washington before January. Last week, they continued to disagree on the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing, which Mr. Gorbachev extended to Jan. 1. The United States has refused to join the moratorium.

In discussing how pliable the Russians might be on arms control, however, some Administration experts and former Pentagon officials caution against making too much of the Soviet Union's economic problems. They say that such problems by themselves are not likely to induce

the Soviet Union to "pay a high price" for an agreement — that is, make major concessions — although they are not saying that the Soviet Union would not derive economic benefits from a major arms agreement. The Soviet Union, they note, has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to military expenditures. According to a report in March by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Soviet Union's military burden in the early 1980's was about 15 to 17 percent of the gross national product, a slight increase since the early 1970's. In contrast, the United States devotes about 6 percent of its much larger economy to the military.

The report also noted that "Gorbachev can coast for a few years on the strength of the U.S.S.R.'s past investment in its military-industrial complex."

Ready to Spend

Some former officials agree that too much should not be made of Soviet economic problems. One of them is Walter B. Slocombe, a ranking Defense Department official in the Carter Administration, the former head of the Pentagon's SALT task force, and now a Washington tax lawyer. "Sure the Soviets have economic problems and they are very severe," he said last week. "But one of the things they have always made space for is whatever they think they need to spend on military forces. They have always managed to pay. It is irresponsibly naive to suggest that we have got some kind of advantage in throwing money at the defense problem."

Another reason for not making too much of the Soviet Union's economic problems is that the fact that spending on nuclear weapons makes up a relatively small portion of each side's military budget. Mr. Slocombe and other former officials also say that economic considerations also have little bearing on the dispute between the United States and the Soviet Union over the 1979 strategic arms treaty. The Reagan Administration has announced its intention to abandon the treaty, which it accuses the Soviet Union of violating. Mr. Slocombe and the former C.I.A. Director, William E. Colby, have said that to show its displeasure, the Soviet Union could take several steps that would cost little but would be of concern to the American intelligence community. Such steps, which are prohibited by the treaty, could include covering missile silos, concealing launchers for mobile missiles, completely encoding Soviet missile telemetry and adding additional warheads to existing missiles.

Early in the Reagan Presidency, the Administration flirted with the idea that the United States could take advantage of the Soviet economic difficulties and use economic sanctions to encourage domestic changes. In a June 1982 address to the British Parliament, Mr. Reagan went so far as to say that the Soviet Union had an "inherently unstable" system that was currently undergoing a "great revolutionary crisis."

But the Administration later conducted a study that culminated in National Security Decision Directive 75. That directive, officials say, concluded that internal Soviet policy would have only limited influence on external policy. Next month's arms negotiations may provide a test of Mr. Reagan's more recent theory that economic burdens may lead to Soviet arms concessions.

Arms Control: Reagan Must Be Firm

Deal Now, While the SDI Bargaining Chip Remains

By WILLIAM E. COLBY and ROBERT D. ENGLISH

President Reagan has the opportunity to conclude the most comprehensive arms limitations in history. But such an agreement, which would be the crowning achievement of his presidency, would require stronger hands-on leadership than he has practiced thus far.

To date, Reagan's "detached" stewardship of arms-control policy has been paradoxically successful. While some have criticized his failure to resolve the deep divisions among his principal advisers, the paralysis that those divisions have caused has also seen the Soviets advance some very positive proposals. But creating an opportunity for arms control is only half the battle. To turn it into reality, the President must first address four basic questions:

Does the United States really want arms control? Of course we do. Reagan has long stated his commitment to deep cuts in both Soviet and American nuclear arsenals. But among his advisers, particularly in the Pentagon, are those who do not share this commitment. Their advice is designed to produce no agreement at all. Some of them have deftly shifted positions on issues like mobile missiles and land-based vulnerability to ensure that our Geneva positions cannot possibly be acceptable. Others have been quietly asking if what America really needs isn't outright nuclear superiority.

These men are not serious about arms control. Since Reagan is, he must face an inevitable, fundamental split with the Pentagon's civilian leadership.

Can we accept Soviet realities? The mention of nuclear superiority raises what is surely the most important of these: No Soviet leader can accept a position of nuclear inferiority. And those who predict that the Soviet economy will collapse if we only push a bit harder are wrong. Time and again the Russian people have borne up under tremendous hardships. Whatever its ills, the controlled Soviet economy, unhindered by popular demands or congressional cuts, can still match or exceed this nation's in any arms race. Mikhail S. Gorbachev would certainly prefer to invest in domestic reforms, but he is prepared for the worst.

Can we face facts on the Strategic Defense Initiative? More than three years since Reagan announced the goal of rendering nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," it is undeniably clear that this is simply not possible with existing or foreseeable technology. The most that SDI can do is improve the survivability of our land-based missiles—something that can be done cheaper and more effectively through arms control, mobile missiles or both.

Can we quit while we're ahead? Reagan's hard line in Geneva has brought important Soviet concessions, but with each passing month his hand grows weaker. There are several reasons. On the Soviet side, Gorbachev has come under increasing pressure, especially from his military. If his arms-control offers, his unilateral test ban and other initiatives don't bear fruit soon, he may be forced to retreat to a harder line. The Kremlin will decide that it can do worse than to ride out Reagan's term and hope for better under his successor.

On the domestic side, the decline has already begun. Defense budgets will grow no further, and SDI is being cut by Congress. Even the unity of the North Atlantic alliance is being threatened. America's allies, opposed to Reagan's decision to discard SALT II, are worried about the future of the anti-ballistic-missile treaty and are dismayed by continuing disunity

in the Administration on key arms issues.

For these reasons, the best time to strike a deal has arrived. Reagan's first step must be to take charge of arms-control policy. In the past he has resolved disputes between the State and Defense departments by "splitting the difference." This approach has generally produced positions that are neither negotiable nor even in America's best interests. Our current position in the strategic arms reduction talks, which would make our land-based missiles even more vulnerable, demonstrates the weakness of this Solomon-like management style.

With a firm hand, Reagan must personally decide the contours of a plausible U.S.-Soviet agreement. Such a deal must inevitably include a trade-off between the ambitious SDI and deep cuts in the Soviets' most destabilizing multiple-warhead missiles. Reagan's latest response to Gorbachev, proposing to ratify SDI to proceed full tilt toward a mid-1990s deployment, is a "non-offer." Gorbachev will not wait forever if Reagan continues to answer each Soviet step forward with another U.S. step backward.

The President must beware of the self-serving advice of the Pentagon's amateur Kremlinologists. They interpret Gorbachev's "serious" mood as proof that he will eventually accept SDI. This is a dangerous delusion. Today Reagan can trade curbs on "Star Wars" for deep cuts in Soviet missiles. But tomorrow, as Congress continues to chip away at SDI, his hand will be much weaker. Gorbachev has toned down his rhetoric because he sees that time may be on his side after all.

The choice is Reagan's. The "window of opportunity" before him is quickly sliding shut. Will Reagan's successors inherit history's best arms-control treaty or its worst arms race?

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EX-CIA MAN'S FLIGHT TO MOSCOW STOKES CHARGES OF U.S. BUNGLING
BY CHRISTOPHER HANSON
WASHINGTON

The Soviet defection of an ex- CIA agent groomed to become a spy-master in Moscow and accused by the United States of selling secrets to the Kremlin has stoked charges U.S. intelligence bungled the case.

Tass news agency announced in Moscow yesterday that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (parliament) had granted an asylum request from the ex-agent, Edward Lee Howard, 34, on humanitarian grounds.

Howard, accused by the Justice Department of selling highly damaging intelligence data to Moscow, was the first former CIA agent ever to seek asylum in the Soviet Union, U.S. intelligence sources said.

The Justice Department had been searching for him since last September when he slipped from under the noses of an FBI surveillance team and disappeared, sparking strong Congressional criticism of U.S. counter-intelligence.

Howard sold his secrets to Moscow after he was dismissed from the CIA in 1983, according to FBI officials. They said his disclosures devastated U.S. spy nets in the Soviet Union and apparently to the execution of one key U.S. agent.

"Both the CIA and the FBI are taking a hard look at themselves because of this mistake," Sen. Patrick Leahy, vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told reporters yesterday. "There were mistakes all around."

The Vermont Democrat said Howard had done serious damage, and more harm was likely to come. "The Soviets are relentless about getting every bid of information he has," he said.

Former CIA official George Carver, now with Georgetown University, told a television audience the CIA had erred in not keeping a closer watch on Howard after he had failed a CIA lie detector test and been accused of drug use in 1983.

Howard was dismissed and allowed to go his own way.

"He was told too much too soon -- too many details," Carver said, referring to Howard's CIA training to become a spy-master in Moscow.

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He was never sent to Moscow, but intelligence sources said his training included details which, when disclosed to Moscow, allowed Kremlin counter-spies to roll up the U.S. networks.

Howard told CIA colleagues soon after being fired that he was thinking of selling secrets to Moscow to extract revenge, intelligence sources said. But despite this he was not put under surveillance until he was fingered as a spy by Soviet defector Vitaly Yurchenko, who later redefected to Moscow.

After leaving the CIA, Howard went to work for the New Mexico state legislature. He is thought to have fled to the Soviet Union via Mexico after a tip-off from Moscow.

American intelligence sources yesterday took some consolation in what they said was the likelihood Howard would lead a miserable life in the Soviet Union.

"It is colder in Moscow than it was in New Mexico," a Justice Department official said.

A Ex- CIA Director William Colby, who termed Howard "a tawdry little man who sold his country out," said the defector would probably end up with a tedious job and lead a lonely life.

"It couldn't have happened to a nicer guy," Colby said.